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Nixon Recalls Alger Hiss Case

Washington

President Nixon said yesterday that the recently completed federal investigation of the break-in at Democratic headquarters had been so thorough and complete that it made the 1948 investigation of suspected Communist Alger Hiss look like "a Sunday school exercise."

At a news conference in his White House office, Mr. Nixon recalled the Hiss inquiry, in which he took part as a young congressman. He spoke in response to a reporter's request that the Republicans "make a clean breast about what you were trying to get done at the Watergate."

"Now when we talk about a clean breast," the President said, "let's look at what has happened. The FBI has assigned 133 agents to this investigation. It followed out 1300 leads. It conducted 1500 interviews."

COMPARISON

The Hiss investigation, he said, "was basically a Sunday school exercise compared to the amount of effort that was put into" the break-in and alleged bugging of the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex.

Hiss, a former State Department official, was convicted of perjury in 1950 after he denied passing secret documents to Whittaker Chambers, a Time magazine editor. He served nearly four years in prison.

In his news conference, the President added that he endorsed the effort put into the Watergate investigation because "I wanted every lead carried out to the end and because I wanted to be sure that no member of the White House staff and no man or woman in a position of major responsibility in the committee for re-election (of the President) had anything to do with this kind of reprehensible activity."

Noting that a Federal grand jury has indicted seven men on charges of conspiring to eavesdrop tap telephones and photograph stolen documents at the Democratic headquarters, Nixon refused further comment on the case because "it is now time to have the judicial process go forward and for the evidence to be presented."

Two of the seven defendants in the pending trial, G. Gordon Liddy, and E. Howard Hunt Jr., are former White House aides in the Nixon administration. Liddy was employed as counsel to the Nixon campaign's finance committee on June 17, the day five of the defendants were arrested inside the Democrats' office. One of these arrested, James W. McCord Jr., was the Republican party's security coordinator at the time of the break-in.

The Justice Department has stressed that neither the FBI investigation nor the grand jury found any evidence to connect the alleged bugging to anyone who was not indicted.

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